Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

BUSINESS PLAN

2001- 2004

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Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)
Business Plan, 2001-2004

1. MANDATE

The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) serves as a body through which stakeholders work co-operatively to ensure effective transferability of courses or programs for students.

ACAT provides leadership to Alberta's post-secondary transfer system to achieve:
- increased educational opportunities for adult learners through student transfer; and
- accurate information for learners about admission and transfer opportunities.

ACAT operates with the support of the Minister of Learning and the co-operation of Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Student transfer involves the portability of educational credit among programs. Based on successful completion of studies, students receive transfer credit, where appropriate, upon admission to an educational program in an Alberta post-secondary institution.

2. MISSION

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer is to be a catalyst for change and an advocate for learners in the areas of admission and transfer to educational programs.

ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enlargement of educational opportunities for learners through inter-institutional transfer. This requires a commitment to improving communication among and between Alberta's post-secondary institutions, as well as stakeholders in the trades and secondary system, and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that means for educational planning for the benefit of learners.

To carry out its mission, ACAT:
- identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders,
- advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles and a specific level through interaction of ACAT's staff with learners, and
- communicates with stakeholders and encourages communication among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer.

3. VISION

ACAT is a leader in ensuring that learners have access to a highly effective and efficient transfer system. ACAT inspires partner institutions to guarantee that prior learning of prospective students is appropriately recognized upon admission.

All individuals and groups who provide or benefit from opportunities to learn, share responsibility for realizing the vision for student transfer in Alberta.

ACAT is guided by its Principles and pre-eminently by principle (a), which states that student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among post-secondary institutions in Alberta shall be optimized. Barriers to student mobility shall be minimized. The integrity of educational programs and certification must, however, be maintained. A student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated nor should more transfer credit be granted than previous learning experiences would warrant for successful completion of the program.

4. GOALS

ACAT has three goals that are necessary to realize its mandate:

Admission
Students will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences.

Transfer
Students will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Communication
Students will have access to current, accurate information on admission requirements and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

5. LINKAGES TO GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA CORE BUSINESSES AND GOALS

ACAT's goals support the Alberta Government's goals with respect to People, Prosperity and Preservation as outlined in the Government of Alberta Business Plan 2001-04. As well, ACAT's goals link to Alberta Learning's core businesses and goals as described in Alberta Learning's 2001/2002 - 2003/2004 Business Plan.

6. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The 2001-2004 Business Plan recognizes the following significant opportunities and challenges:

Student Admission to Post-Secondary Programs
It is desirable that students make successful transitions from high school to post-secondary programs. This objective poses a challenge to improve articulation between the secondary and post-secondary systems. As 30-level curriculum is revised, post-secondary institutions will need to review admission requirements in a timely manner. Building on its successful experience with articulation of post-secondary courses and programs, ACAT will develop strategies to improve secondary to post-secondary articulation. As part of this initiative, ACAT will work with stakeholders to develop strategies to improve communication about admission requirements to post-secondary programs. Through this enhanced role, ACAT can help promote smoother transitions as students move from the Basic to the Adult Learning systems. ACAT will provide leadership to ensure that future post-secondary admission issues are addressed. With clear information, high school students will be able to select appropriate courses to meet entrance requirements of post-secondary programs and thereby make a smooth transition to post-secondary study.

Applied Mathematics
ACAT will play a lead role in facilitating discussion of high school Applied Mathematics curriculum revisions involving post-secondary stakeholders and Alberta Learning. An expected outcome of this discussion will be the identification of topics for a potential transition course that would prepare students who have completed Applied Mathematics 30 to be admitted to programs at post-secondary institutions in lieu of Pure Math 30.

English Language Arts
ACAT will play a role in facilitating discussion of implementation of the revised high school English Language Arts curriculum involving post-secondary stakeholders and Alberta Learning.

Social Studies
ACAT will play a role in facilitating discussion of implementation of the revised high school Social Studies curriculum involving post-secondary stakeholders and Alberta Learning.

Working Group Recommendations
Where appropriate, work with stakeholders regarding recommendations contained in the final report of the Working Group on Admissions and Transfer.

Pathways to Careers
A range of pathways including high school College Tech Prep programs as well as the Registered Apprenticeship Program are helping high school students as they develop their career plans and related educational objectives. There are opportunities to build awareness among stakeholders and to make such programs more useful by ensuring that articulation agreements gain appropriate recognition across the student transfer system.

Acceptance of Academic Upgrading Courses
ACAT has built credibility for its Academic Upgrading charts so that adult learners are able to use these courses for admission to post-secondary programs. However, there are adult learners who would like to complete the requirements for Alberta Learning's high school diploma by taking several appropriate academic upgrading courses at post-secondary institutions. There is an opportunity for ACAT to work with Alberta Learning and stakeholders to create new opportunities for adult learners to earn an Alberta High School diploma.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
Learners applying to programs at post-secondary institutions should have access to flexible and effective means of assessing their learning obtained in the workplace, from non-traditional providers, or from formal Continuing Education non-credit programs, so that their application for admission can be reviewed without delay, and there is no unnecessary duplication of courses, nor inappropriate loss of credit. ACAT has adopted principles and standards for the recognition of prior learning and post-secondary institutions have developed policies. ACAT's PLAR Advisory Committee can play a role in setting out guidelines for the transfer to a second institution of credit for prior learing that has been granted at another institutuion.

e-Learning
As more and more learners take advantage of e-Learning opportunities from around the globe, there will be increasing need to facilitate recognition of prior learning.

Applied Degrees
Students entering applied degree programs at public colleges and technical institutes need to know how their post-secondary learning will transfer and meet program requirements.

Block Transfer Opportunities
As Albertans pursue career paths that require further learning, more block transfer agreements would provide expanded opportunities for career laddering from certificate to diploma to degree programs. At the same time, one needs to be cognizant of students who don't complete the block of courses to ensure they don't have to repeat learning as well.

Student Advising
The formal negotiation of course transfer agreements as well as program transfer agreements has served Alberta's students well but there is a continuing challenge to improve transfer opportunities through better program advising information to prospective transfer students. Students considering transfer require access to accurate information about programs and courses they need to select for successful transfer into the chosen program.

Program Articulation
Current articulation initiatives will be maintained while emerging course or program articulation issues should be recognized and identified. Decisions to initiate articulation work will reflect input from stakeholders such as ACTISEC, CAUS, and senior academic officers, Contact Persons, and the ACAT Infoline.

Success of Transfer Students
Success of students who transfer, including graduates of diploma programs, should continue to be monitored.

7. BUSINESS PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, ACTIONS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

GOAL: *Admission* - Students will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences.

Objective: Improve student transitions from secondary to post-secondary studies		
2001-2004 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Promote smooth transitions as students move from high school to post-secondary programs.	• Collaborate with Alberta Learning and stakeholders. • Articulation committees involving secondary and post-secondary system stakeholders established as needed.	• Post-secondary admission issues are addressed as 30-level curriculum is revised. • Math transition course prepares students for admission to some post-secondary programs. • Implementation of revised English Language Arts curriculum proceeds smoothly.
Collaborate to produce secondary to post-secondary student transition information.	• Continue collaboration with Alberta Learning to study high school - post-secondary transitions.	• Report on transitions of the 1999-2000 Grade 12 cohort to identify trends.
Encourage appropriate recognition of academic upgrading courses to fulfill high school diploma requirements.	• Work with Alberta Learning and stakeholders.	• Adult learners have new opportunities to complete high school diploma.
Encourage appropriate recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs.	• Continue to work with partners through the articulation process to ensure currency and integrity of admission charts. • Expand recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission, where appropriate.	• Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to college or technical institute programs. • Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to university or private university college programs.
Objective: Improve opportunities for students to apply for admission		
Advocate development of Internet applications for admission and access to course registration.	• Encourage use of Internet applications for admission to post-secondary programs.	• Annual evidence that more institutions offer electronic applications for admission.
Objective: Monitor application activity to identify trends		
Implement Duplicate Application Detection (DAD) project to identify trends.	• Continue to work with partners to refine and implement the Duplicate Application Detection project.	• Conduct Duplicate Application Detection study, Fall 2001 to identify trends in application activitiy.

Performance Indicator

Annually provide information on application activity to programs at post-secondary institutions, Fall Admissions cycle.

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and post-secondary institutions through the Duplicate Application Detection project database.

Target: Identify trends regarding application activity for the Fall admission cycle.

GOAL: *Transfer* - Students will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Objective: Facilitate an effective and efficient student transfer system		
2001-2004 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Produce system-wide principles, policies and procedures to facilitate the student transfer system.	• Continue collaboration with institutional partners to maintain and refine policy framework.	• Produce effective principles, policies and procedures to facilitate efficient operation of the student transfer system.
Monitor effectiveness of transfer system.	• Collaborate with partners to implement Transfer Patterns Study.	• Conduct the Transfer Patterns Study, Fall 2001 to identify trends in student transfer.
Ensure continuing accuracy of transfer agreements.	• Continue collaboration with institutional Contact Persons to review all transfer agreements before production of the next *Alberta Transfer Guide*.	• Annual publication of the *Alberta Transfer Guide* with accurate transfer information. • Ongoing publication of transfer information through the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
Improve program articulation.	• Maintain ongoing program articulation initiatives. • Implement program articulation process when new initiatives are required.	• As post-secondary programs are revised, student transfer issues are addressed.
Enlarge transfer opportunities.	• Encourage institutional partners to negotiate course transfer agreements where appropriate. • Encourage partners to develop program or block agreements that ladder from one credential to another. • Encourage efficiencies by asking institutions to review internal transfer approval processes. • Facilitate transfer agreements through ACAT's Private Providers Policy.	• Annual evidence of number of course transfer opportunities for students. • Annual evidence of number of career laddering opportunities. • Ongoing review results in a more efficient transfer system. • Private Provider Fact Sheets are available to post-secondary institutions on request.
Objective: Provide leadership for system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments		
Advocate the development of effective institutional policies and procedures for assessment of prior learning as well as system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments.	• Continue to collaborate with partners.	• Publish compilation of PLAR policies at selected institutions when warranted.

Performance Indicators

1. **Annually provide evidence of number of opportunities for student transfer.**

Report information on the total number of course and program transfer agreements published in Section 3 of the annual *Alberta Transfer Guide.*

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, transfer agreement database at publication of each edition of the *Alberta Transfer Guide.*

Target: Maintain or increase the number of transfer opportunities for students.

2. **Annually implement the Transfer Patterns Study to provide information on trends in student transfer.**

Source: Reports from institutions as requested by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

Target: Identify trends in student mobility.

3. **Provide evidence of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) policies at Alberta post-secondary institutions.**

Source: Reports from post-secondary institutions as requested by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

Target: Increase the number of post-secondary institutions with policies that enable students to have access to flexible and effective means of assessment of their prior learning when they apply for admission to programs at post-secondary institutions.

GOAL: *Communication* - Students will have access to current, accurate information on admission and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

Objective: Provide information to assist potential transfer students		
2001-2004 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Provide information to support students transferring to Alberta institutions so they can make informed decisions as they plan their studies.	• Continue to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements.	• Annually publish the *Alberta Transfer Guide* so that learners have accurate information on courses and programs that transfer as well as admission policies.
	• Implement the new Online Alberta Transfer Guide and its redesigned database to meet growing needs of the transfer system. • Encourage stakeholders to link their site to the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.	• Enhanced delivery of accurate information at the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
	• Promote the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS).	• Learners can link to ALIS from Online Alberta Transfer Guide and read about ALIS on inside cover of *Alberta Transfer Guide.*
	• Promote the Electronic Application Service.	• Using the Internet, learners can apply for admission.
	• Continue to provide the Transfer Infoline service via the Online Alberta Transfer Guide and telephone.	• Learners with questions about admissions or transfer can obtain useful information. • Use Infoline inquiries to monitor effectiveness of transfer system.
	• Publish program advising charts for selected subject areas.	• Learners can access transfer information in Biological Sciences and Engineering.
Provide information to support Alberta students transferring to other jurisdictions.	• Distribute the *Alberta Transfer Guide* to universities, colleges, and technical institutes across Canada and selected organizations abroad. • Publicize the Online Alberta Transfer Guide beyond the province.	• Alberta students transfer to other Canadian post-secondary institutions and receive appropriate credit.
Provide information to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• Continue to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• High school students who move to Alberta obtain accurate information on admission to Alberta post-secondary programs.

Performance Indicators

1. **Annually report on student satisfaction with delivery of admission and transfer information.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and stakeholders including ACTISEC and CAUS.

Target: High percentage of students are:

- Aware of sources of transfer information, and;
- Able to access ACAT's information easily.

2. **Annually report participation in the student transfer system as shown by the number of institutions that negotiated transfer agreements for publication in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, transfer agreement database.

Target: Ensure that the *Alberta Transfer Guide* is a registry of all formal transfer agreements within the Alberta transfer system.

3. **Annually provide evidence of procedures to assure accuracy of transfer information in the Transfer Guide and the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

Target: Maintain or improve the accuracy of transfer information.